

4475aa
COMFORT

FOR

4475aa.126.
SION'S MOURNERS:

OR,

The Final Perseverance of the Saints.

A
SERMON

Preached at PORTSMOUTH,

By SAMUEL MEADOWS,



LONDON:

Printed for the AUTHOR;

And Sold by GEORGE KEITH, in Gracechurch-Street;
and JOSEPH GURNEY, at No. 54, facing Hatton-
Garden, Holborn. 1769.

[Price Six-pence.]

COMFORT

FOR

STON'S MONUMENTS:

OR

The kind Recurrence of the same.

A

SERMON

Preached at FORTSMOUTH,

BY SAMUEL MEADOWS.



LONDON:

Printed for the Author;

And Sold by George Kearsley, in Strand-street;
and Joseph Gurney, at No. 24, facing Strand-street.
Glasgow, Edinburgh, 1790.

[Price six pence.]

PHILIPPIANS i. 6.

Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

AMONG the remarkable dispensations of providence and grace, the planting of a church at Philippi is no inconsiderable one. This will appear if we survey the situation of the place. Philippi was a city of Macedonia, a country in Greece; it derived its name from Philip king of Macedonia, father of Alexander the Great, but was then in the hands of the Romans, and a colony of that empire^a. It was overspread with a black cloud of pagan darkness, full of gross idolatry, and superstition; yet even in that place, gloomy as it was, there was a remnant according to the election of grace, and even at that time their conversion must be executed. The instrument assigned for this important work, was the great apostle of the Gentiles, &c. who we find

find at Troas, and by a vision in the night was invited to visit Macedonia^b; for we are informed by the sacred writer, that a vision appeared to Paul in the night, “ There stood a
 “ man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying,
 “ come over into Macedonia and help us.” Upon this the apostle consulted not with flesh and blood, but in obedience to the heavenly vision immediately prepared for Macedonia, and loosing from Troas, he and his companion safely arrived at Philippi^c. And on the sabbath, “ we went out of the city, saith he, by a
 “ river side, where prayer was wont to be
 “ made, and we sat down, and spake unto
 “ the women which resorted thither; and a
 “ certain woman named Lydia, a seller of
 “ purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord
 “ opened that she attended unto the things
 “ which were spoken of Paul”^d. This woman and her household, with the jailor and his household^e, were the first plants of the Philippian church: but behold the wonderful increase, consisting not only of many precious members who are called saints in Christ Jesus, but

^b Acts xvi. 9, 10.^c Ibid. xvi. 11.^d Ibid. xvi. 13,

14.

^e Ibid. xvi. 33, 34.

but also of bishops and deacons, to whom this epistle is sent, and having saluted them with his common salutation of grace and peace, than which nothing can be more desireable, he gives them to understand how thankful he was to the Lord in his prayers on their behalf, for their fellowship in the gospel from the first day until that time, as appears from the verses preceding our text ; which to him was an incontestible proof of a good work being begun, which he was fully perswaded should be carried on until the day of Jesus Christ ; and, therefore, without any hesitation, gives his sentiment on this point in the words of the text, as follows, “ being confident of this very thing, “ that he which hath begun a good work in “ you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” In discoursing on these words, I shall endeavour, as the Lord may enable me, to explain the following things.

I. The good work begun;

II. By whom it was begun;

III. The apostle's confidence, that it should be finished or performed until the day of Jesus Christ.

I. The good work begun ; by which I humbly conceive is meant no less than the work of grace in the heart, at regeneration, which is a great and marvelous work, and is sometimes called a being begotten again, being born again, created in Christ Jesus, with such like modes of expression ^f, and in the words of our text, “ a good work begun in you,” as it certainly is, and will appear, if we consider it as the foundation of grace laid in the heart, which is grace radically considered. But to be more particular ; three things are worthy our observation, and command our serious attention. 1. It is a good work ; 2. A good work in you ; 3. A good work begun.

1. It is a good work, and that, 1. In its nature, inasmuch as we are said to be made partakers of the divine nature ^g, which is called a new heart, a new spirit, and a heart of flesh ; “ a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh ^h” ; so that there is now a good understanding to discern spiritual things, a good will inclining to that which is spiritually good, good affections from whence

^f 1 Peter i. 3, 23.
^g Ezek. xxxvi. 20.

Eph. ii. 10.

^h 2 Pet. i. 4.

good desires arise, which are going forth after good objects, tho' much opposed at times by the remaining corruptions within.

2. It is good in its effects, in that it produces good works. The happy subject of this divine principle becomes a good man; and in whatever capacity he stands, answers that character in some measure. Grace makes good princes and good subjects, good ministers and good hearers, good masters and good servants, good parents and good children; in short, it makes them good christians, which like money answers all thingsⁱ; and indeed this is the true riches, to be rich in grace, for this is durable riches; and therefore,

3. Is good in its end, since it meetens a man for the fruition of everlasting bliss; "Who hath made us meet," says the apostle, "to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light^k."

II. It is a good work In You, and is therefore called by the apostle Paul the Inward Man which is renewed day by day^l; and by the apostle Peter "the hidden man of the heart"^m, but let it be "the hidden man of the heart in" that

ⁱ Eccl. x. 19. ^k Col. i. 12. ^l 2 Cor. iv. 16. ^m 1 Pet.

“ that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” If any should object and say, that our sanctification and justification are all in Christ, and that we have no holiness in ourselves; I answer, 1. Justification and sanctification, I humbly conceive, are two distinct things. Justification, or to justify, is to absolve and quit one that is accused from the crime wherewith he is charged, and to pronounce him innocent, so that he stands irreprovable in the sight of God’s righteous law, and that by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, he being made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in himⁿ; and is what the apostle means, when he saith (citing the psalmist David) “ Even as David also described both the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin”^o. Sanctification is a holiness imparted, whereby we are made internally holy, without which no flesh shall see God.

Justi

Justification is a work of the Divine Father,
 " Being justified freely by his grace, through
 " the redemption that is in Jesus Christ ^q."

Sanctification is a work of the Divine Spirit,
 " But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified,
 " but ye are justified in the name of the Lord
 " Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God ^r."

Note, justification in this text, is to be considered as it stands in our sight, or subjectively, which is a branch of our sanctification.

3. Justification gives us a right to glory ;
 " In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be
 " justified, and shall glory ^s." Sanctification
 meetens us for glory, or to be partakers of
 the inheritance of the saints in light. Justifi-
 cation is complete, " And ye are complete in
 " him, who is the head of all principality
 " and power ^t," namely Christ, " by whom
 " all that believe are justified from all things,
 " from which ye could not be justified by the
 " law of Moses ^u." But sanctification, though
 complete in its nature, yet is incomplete in its
 being a progressive work, consequently distinct
 from justification.

2. Sanctification in Christ, and sanctifica-
 tion in us, are also distinct things. Sanctifica-

B

tion

^q Rom. iii. 29.

^r 1 Cor. 6. 11.

^s Isaiah xlix. 25.

^t Col. ii. 10.

^u Acts xiii. 39.

tion in Christ is the fountain of living water ;
 “ For it pleased the Father that in him should
 “ all fulness dwell ^w.” Sanctification in us
 is the stream derived from that fountain, “ For
 “ out of his fulness have all we received, and
 “ grace for grace ^x.” Sanctification in Christ
 is without measure, “ for he giveth not the
 “ Spirit by measure unto him ^y, but hath
 “ anointed him with the oil of gladness above
 “ his fellows ^z. Sanctification in us is in mea-
 sure, “ according as he giveth to every man
 “ the measure of faith.” Sanctification in
 Christ is communicable ; “ if any man thirst,
 “ let him come unto me and drink ^a.” Sanc-
 tification in us is incommunicable ; the wise vir-
 gins could not communicate oil to the foolish.

3. Grace is in every regenerate soul, by
 which they are washed and sanctified, or else
 what could the apostle mean in the fore cited
 passage, “ but ye are washed, but ye are sanc-
 “ tified :” surely these could never mean
 Christ, since the persons spoken of and refer-
 red to in the context, were actual and enor-
 mous sinners ^b ; thieves, covetous, drunkards,
 revilers, &c. which Christ was not ; for when
 he was reviled he reviled not again, and though
 he

^w Col. i. 19. ^x John i. 16. ^y John iii. 34. ^z Heb.
 i. 9. ^a John vii. 27. ^b 1 Cor. vi. 10.

he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet was without sin, without actual sin; yea though he was made sin for us, yet it was only by imputation, not by impartation, nor had he any unholiness in his nature, but was that holy thing, which was born of the virgin Mary, consequently stood in no need of washing. The application is easy.

4. No man in a state of nature can discern spiritual objects, or act faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned."

A vivify faculty is essential to discerning, which the unregenerate have not, but are darkness in the abstract, till the good work is begun in them, then are they light in the Lord^d; "for ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." They cannot believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is an act of the soul, and necessarily supposeth life, which a natural man hath not, but is dead in trespasses and sins: now to suppose a man in such a state to act faith, is to suppose he could act before he exists, the incongruity of which

is obvious; this may serve to elucidate the interrogation of the apostle Paul, "What maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" From the whole it is evident, that one man doth differ from another, and that it is the grace of God maketh this difference; so that every enlightened soul may say, by the grace of God I am what I am; they are the subjects of a divine principle; they have a good work begun in them.

III. It is a good work begun, not finished; and it is a good work begun in you, not begun with you; we brought it not into the world with us, it is not essential to our nature, as fallen creatures: no, for whatever notions we may imbibe of original purity, and the rectitude of human nature, they are spurious; such as holy men of old, who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, were intire strangers to. The holy sufferer Job, in his divine interrogation, renounces such a sentiment, when he saith, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one^e." Also the royal Psalmist strongly militates against it; "Behold, saith he, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me^z."

Yea,

^e 1 Cor. iv. 7.

^f Job xiv. 4.

^z Psa. li. 5.

Yea, the great anti-type of both Job and David assures us, that "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" and then renders a reason for it, viz. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh ^h."

Again, It is a good work begun, and not finished, otherwise we should be come to a state of perfection, which some vainly imagine; but I believe such persons are perfectly ignorant of their own hearts, or at most know but very little of that body of sin and death they carry about them; and this I know, that the apostle Paul, when he wrote this epistle, was not arrived to a state of perfection; "Not," says he, as though I had already attained, "either were already perfect." No, he knew to the contrary; he knew that in him, that is, in his flesh, there dwelt no good thing: and we find the evangelical prophet complaining of the uncleanness of his lips, saying, "Wo is me, for I am a man of unclean lips ⁱ;" and that disciple who Jesus loved, expresseth himself thus; "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us ^k." Now if those illustrious saints of old, stars of the first magnitude, came short of perfection

^h John iii. 3, 6. ⁱ Isaiah vi. 5. ^k 1 John i. 8.

fection in this life, surely we also must come short of the same.

Let us then consider sanctification as a progressive work, a work which will run through the progress of our life; and regeneration as a good work begun in you, which shall be performed until the day of Jesus Christ. I come now to the second general head, to shew by whom this good work was begun.

II. This good work is begun by the Lord God omnipotent, nor is any less in power able to execute the same. Man in his natural state hath no spiritual power to exert; but power is absolutely necessary to the production of a divine principle. Lazarus might as soon have raised himself from the dead, as a man raise himself who is dead in trespasses and sins: as Ezekiel's dry bones in the vision required a supernatural power to their being quickened, so do man in a natural state; which power alone is in God; and this is sometimes ascribed to the Divine Father¹, likewise to the Lord Jesus Christ^m, but more commonly to the Blessed Spirit, whose work it is, as the sanctifier, more immediately to sanctify poor sinners. In this œconomy the grace of God the Father may be

¹ 1 Peter i. 3. ^m John v. 25.

be considered as the impulsive cause, as he treasured up grace for us in Christ; "who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." The glorious Lord Jesus is the procuring or securing cause, in whom it was safely deposited notwithstanding the fall of man; the blessed Spirit is the efficient cause, by whose divine agency it is conveyed to the hearts of men; and there is also the instrumental cause, I mean the instruments the Lord is pleased to make use of in this interesting work. But to be more explicit on this second head, I shall consider the three following particulars.

First, Some instruments which the Lord makes use of.

Secondly, The immediate operations on the heart.

Thirdly, The following effects.

1. Some of the instruments, or means, the Lord is pleased to make use of. The ordinary means is his own blessed word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword,

to

to which it is sometimes comparedⁿ; as also to a fire and a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces^o, the efficacy of which is visibly exhibited in sacred writ. Remarkable is that instance of the great conversion by Peter's sermon, where no less than three thousand, who gladly received the word, were baptized, and added to the church. Lydia's heart also the Lord opened by the preaching of Paul, and the jailor's household appeared to be converted by the same instrument; nor is it foreign to christian experience in our days, how many precious souls have been truly awakened by the instrumentality of the word, sometimes by its being preached, and it may be when no more than mere curiosity, or a worse motive, have excited to attend the public worship; sometimes by reading it, or other good books, as we are informed was the case of colonel Gardner. Aweful dispensations of providence have sometimes been instrumental to this great work. The jailor must first be alarmed by a natural earthquake, in order to make way for a spiritual one. A like instance of this I knew of a young man who was at Lisbon at the time that the earthquake had swallowed up the city, who

ⁿ Heb. iv. 12.^o Jerem. xxiii. 29.

who narrowly escaped with his natural life, yet happily gained a spiritual one. Sometimes the death of a relation may have this happy effect, an instance of which I have heard of. We are informed by the inspired writer, that when the dead man was cast into the grave of Elisha, as soon as he touched the bones of the prophet, he revived, and stood up on his feet; this is an amazing truth, and no less wonderful is it for a poor sinner, in a spiritual dead state, to be touched with a sense of one corporally dead, to his reviving and standing on his spiritual feet. Again, the Lord hath sometimes made the gentle admonition of a godly friend to answer that great and valuable end, an instance of which I lately met with, and is also a point of my own experience. These, and many other instances, might be given of the instruments the Lord is pleased to make use of; but then, as I hinted, they are instruments, and no more. We are informed in the sacred oracle, that when Elijah was awaked under the juniper-tree, he went from thence to Horeb, where he was commanded to stand upon the mount before the Lord; and “be-
 “hold the Lord passed by, and a great and
 “strong wind rent the mountains and brake

“ in pieces the rocks before the Lord ; but the
 “ Lord was not in the wind ; and after the
 “ wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not
 “ in the earthquake ; and after the earthquake
 “ a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire ;
 “ and after the fire a still small voice.” Thus
 it is not with the rocky heart of a sinner ; no,
 for unless the Lord be in the wind, the rock
 will not be rent, neither will the earthquake
 shake effectually, nor the fire melt, but even
 the still small voice will answer the end if the
 Lord be found therein.

2. The immediate operations on the heart ;
 and these are more violent on some, and gentle
 on others, according to the sovereign will of
 God ; instances of which may be produced
 both from scripture and experience. Powerful
 was the operation the converts by Peter passed
 under, of whom it is said, “ they were pricked
 “ in their hearts ^p.” A powerful operation in-
 deed, the sword of the Spirit had reached their
 soul, wounded the most sensible part, and
 that deeply, beyond, far beyond the skill of an
 earthly physician, but not beyond the reach
 of our heavenly one.

The

The operation on Saul was no less powerful, as appears from the narrative of his conversion, where we find the wretched object struck blind with the refulgent glory of his persecuted Saviour, trembling and astonishment seizing him, his body trembling, and his soul astonished at the amazing scene, and unknown doom^a. In like manner the jailor was dreadfully agitated, as appears from his new conduct to his prisoners; for we are told, that he sprang in and came trembling, “and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, sirs, what must I do to be saved?” A few hours at most before this, he put them in the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks; but now the scene was changed; fearfulness and trembling were come upon him, and salvation was the object of his pursuit. Nor is it improbable, that some of us are living witnesses of this awful truth, that violent operations accompany conversion; but this is not always the case, the Lord is pleased sometimes to deal more gently with others; we have no reason to believe that the jailor’s household passed under such violent operations as himself, nor Lydia, spoken of in the same chapter,

C 2

“ whose

^a Acts ix. 6.^r Acts xvi. 31, 32.

“ whose heart (it is said) the Lord opened
 “ that she attended unto the things which were
 “ spoken of Paul.” Neither do I believe that
 the Berean converts were much terrified at
 their first awakening, since they “ received
 “ the word with all readiness of mind.” No,
 nor even Zaccheus the publican; for we find as
 soon as our Lord called him from the syco-
 more-tree; “ He made haste and came down,
 “ and received him joyfully.” Nor is it rea-
 sonable to suppose, that Peter, Andrew, James,
 John, &c. passed under such powerful opera-
 tions as before mentioned; and yet I doubt
 not, but all had their convictions in a measure,
 but not in equal measure; from whence it ap-
 pears to me both unscriptural and unreasonable,
 to measure other christians experience by the
 standard of my own. Must I conclude a man
 is not of the same nature with myself, because
 he is not of the same stature, complexion, and
 features, with myself; this would be incon-
 gruous; no less would it be to suppose a soul
 is not converted, because his experience agrees
 not with mine in every punctillio.

Again, some like Timothy, under pious pa-
 rents, may be trained up in the nurture and ad-
 monition

monition of the Lord, and like him know the scriptures from a child^u; into whose tender heart the grace of God may imperceptibly enter, so that they can tell neither time nor place, where or when the good work was begun; yet such should not be dejected or cast down, since the following circumstances are incontestable proofs that it is begun.

3. The effects following the work begun; and they are these, a breathing after holiness and happiness, a crying unto God for them, which naturally suppose life in the subject, and is expressive of the desire of the soul, and is called in scripture, panting, longing, hungering, thirsting, &c. and our Lord hath graciously condescended to inform such for their encouragement; that they are blessed, and they shall be filled; saying, "blessed are they which do
"hunger and thirst after righteousness, for
"they shall be filled."

Now this spiritual appetite, or gracious desire, springs from a divine principle; as a carnal appetite, or sinful desire, springs from an evil principle; so that as evil desires are evil in their nature; so holy desires are holy in their nature; some of which I shall take notice of as
found

found in gracious souls. 1. They desire sin-pardoning grace, or a manifestation of the pardon of sin, that their souls may be comforted, that God may be glorified, that Christ may be exalted, and that the Spirit may be adored more and more. 2. They desire heart-cleansing grace, that their corruptions may be subdued, that every irregular appetite may subside, and their predominant lusts fall like Dagon before the ark. 3. They desire supporting grace to prevent murmurings and peevishness under losses, crosses, disappointments, and various perplexities incident to this state of trial and probation. 4. They desire soul-fortifying grace, that they may withstand all the wiles of the devil, his fiery darts, and unknown temptations, as also the persecutions, frowns, and flatteries of cruel, unreasonable, and deceitful men. 5. They desire persevering grace, not only the habit in their heart, which is immortal, and can never perish, but that it may increase and grow in lively exercise to the production of much fruit, that their boughs, like Joseph's, may grow over the wall. To which end, 6. They desire to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of their lives, to behold the beauties of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.

Finally,

Finally, They desire that all their dear friends and relations may participate of the same inestimable blessings, and at last meet together in the glorious realms of inconceivable bliss. Now where these desires are found, I think we may safely conclude, there is a good work begun, which shall be carried on until the day of Jesus Christ. Which brings me to my third general head.

III. The apostle's confidence, that it should be finished, or performed, until the day of Jesus Christ.

Wherein I shall observe the following things;

1. What we may understand by the day of Jesus Christ. 2. The carrying on and performing the good work begun. 3. The ground of the apostle's confidence. By the day of Jesus Christ, I humbly conceive, is meant, either, 1. The day of death, when the Spirit shall ascend to God that gave it, and behold with ravishing delight the blessed Lord Jesus Christ in his unvailed glory, pursuant to his prayer for them on earth; "Father, I will
" that they also whom thou hast given me be
" with me where I am, that they may behold
" my glory." This will be such a day of
Jesus

Jesus Christ, as the soul never enjoyed before, and such a sight of him as in this gross tabernacle of clay is unattainable ; for the brightest saints on earth, with the clearest perception, see but through a glass darkly, but then shall they see as they are seen. Or else, 2. By the day of Jesus Christ, the apostle might mean his second coming, which is oftentimes called the day of the Lord, viz. the Lord Jesus Christ ; in which day the bodies of the living saints shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ; all the corrupt qualities of the body shall be eradicated, also the sinful habits of the soul (and so it is indeed with the souls before mentioned.) Now as this day of the Lord was locked up in the mind of omniscience, it was concealed both from men and angels ; so that the apostle knew neither the day nor the hour, and perhaps thought it might come in his day, of which some intimation is given to the church of Corinth ; “ Behold, I shew you a mystery, “ we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be “ changed in a moment, in the twinkling of “ an eye *.” Also to the church of Thessalonica ; “ Then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them “ in

* 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

“ in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air ^v.”

Now at the day of Jesus Christ in either sense mentioned, the sinful habits of the soul being eradicated, grace will be changed into glory, faith into vision, and hope into fruition; then the good work of grace begun, will be performed, and finished, even at the day of Jesus Christ.

2. I shall observe the carrying on this good work. It is carried on by the same divine agent which began it; and as the operations and experience of christians differ in the beginning, so likewise in the carrying on this good work; for, 1. Some there are, that have strong faith, while others have but weak faith; there are lambs as well as sheep in the flock of Christ; and the former, though weak, are as precious as the latter; and should they die lambs, yet as they are part of the little flock, “ It is the Father’s good pleasure to give them the kingdom ^z.” They are as much the gift of the Father, and the purchase of Christ, as the sheep, and have that good work begun in them, which shall be carried on. In God’s family there are little children, as well as young and old men, and the former are as precious

D

as

as the latter; no man will disinherit his little child because he is not grown up to man's estate; he is as nearly related to him, and as much of the human specie, as the adult, and should he die in his childhood, his death is so precious in the sight of his father, that care will be taken to bury him, *body and bone*.

So likewise the death of the saints, whether young or old, is so precious in the sight of the Lord, that care shall be taken to convey their souls safe to everlasting glory; and so precious are their bodies in the sight of Christ, that of all that the Father hath given him he will lose none, but will raise them up at the last day^a.
 2. All old christians have not the greatest manifestations of God's love; some, like the prodigal, though the youngest son, shall have great discoveries of his father's complacency in killing for him the fatted calf, &c. while others, who are more advanced in age, like the eldest son, never had a kid to make merry with a friend; that is, never had such a token of their father's love, so as to rejoice as some younger christians do, which sometimes, through temptations, is ready to cause heart-risings, when they consider that such as have lived profuse
 lives,

lives, should so soon after their return to the Lord have such strong assurance of their interest in his favour, which they, who have constantly attended his service, should know little of; but this must be resolved into the sovereignty of God, who hath a right to do what he will with his own, nor should our eye be evil because he is good; but rather inquire whether mere formality, or some other cause, have not been a bar in our way. 3. No christian has the same degree of faith at all times. David was sometimes on the mount, at other times in the valley. Peter's faith was so strong, that he could walk on the liquid element; in a few minutes he begins to sink, and cries to his Lord for help. These are branches of christian experience, that he which runneth in the christian race may read. 4. All christians do not bring forth the same quantity of fruit; some bring forth thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred; some, like Joseph, their branches grow over the wall, while others we find contracted; from whence you may easily observe, that in the carrying on this good work, christians differ much in their experience. Yet, 5. All christians, more or less, may experience the good work carrying on by the exercise of
yab
D 2
their

their spiritual senses. 1. They see the evil of their hearts and actions, for which they are made to lothe themselves; then they see an excellency in Christ, for which they prize him above all created good. 2. They feel the burden of sin more or less every time they revolt from the Lord; they also feel an ease from that burden in proportion to their faith in casting it on him. 3. They smell their wounds stink and corrupt through their foolishness, and they smell a sweet savour in the name of Jesus as of ointment poured forth. 4. They hear the thunders of the law, more or less, in proportion to the nearness they are brought to mount Sinai; and they hear the joyful sound of the gospel in proportion to their nearness to mount Sion. 5. They taste the bitterness of sin and detest it, and they taste the sweetness of grace and love it; thus the christian's spiritual senses are exercised in the carrying on that good work, which shall be performed until the day of Jesus Christ.

3. The ground of the apostle's confidence. And here, I suppose, we may find good ground for the soul to cast anchor in, that is called by the grace of God, or in whom the good work is begun, that it shall be performed until the day

day of Jesus Christ; as 1. The everlasting love of God, "I have loved thee, saith the Lord, with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee b." From whence we learn, that being drawn by the grace of God is the effect of his everlasting love, which love is like himself immutable; therefore he is said to "rest in his love c," it being from everlasting to everlasting; so that they who are the blessed objects thereof shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation d: to suppose otherwise is repugnant to divine revalation, and attended with gross absurdities; as, 1. That everlasting will have an end, which is a contradiction in terms; or, 2. That God will love some to everlasting, that shall eternally perish; and, 3. That the scriptures are not the word of God; yea it is tacitly supposing that God may cease to love his own dear son; since God's love to his people centers in him, and this our apostle well knew, "being perswaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, &c. nor any other creature should be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

b. Jerem. xxxi. 3. c. Zep. iij. 13. d. Isaiiah xlv. 17.

“Lord.” There it centers and there it rests; which sentiment is corroborated by Christ himself, who when speaking to his Divine Father in the days of his flesh, said, “thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” Redemption by the blood of Christ is a good ground of confidence, since Christ hath “by his one offering for ever perfected them that are sanctified.” He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Now, if such souls are not saved, what must it be ascribed to? Not to a deficiency in the ransom, since full satisfaction is made to the demands of law and justice. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us;” nor must we impeach the justice of God to affirm that some are redeemed and not saved; God forbid; this would be making the holy one of Israel worse than a mahometan magistrate, who when he hath received the ransom of slaves sets the captives free. Some may be ready to say, they “will not come that they might have life;” to which I answer, where the good work is begun, there is life already, and

and all that are given to Christ by the Father shall come to him, and him that cometh, "he will in ^{no} wise cast out;" such with the apostle may give an holy challenge, "who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." A further ground of confidence is, that this good work is in the hand of the Spirit of God, who is that God, against whom Ananias and Sapphira sinned, who is as able to bring dead sinners to spiritual life, as he was to strike living sinners with corporal death, and is no less able to carry on the good work begun: to suppose otherwise, would reflect on the wisdom, or power of that divine agent, and would (as hinted by a judicious divine) be levelling omnipotence with the heathen prince, who set his heart on Daniel to deliver him^k, and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him, and after all miscarried. 4. There is ground for confidence, where the good work is begun in the many and precious promises, invitations, and encouragements in the blessed word of God; "My sheep hear my voice," said Christ, and I know them, and they "follow

^a Rom. viii. 33, 34.

ⁱ Acts v. 3, 4.

^k Dan. vi. 14.

“ follow me, and I give unto them eternal
 “ life, and they shall never perish, neither shall
 “ any pluck them out of my hand¹.” This
 great care of Christ, as a shepherd, is an eter-
 nal bar against the strongest efforts of their
 most implacable enemies; herein both power
 and love appear, and are beautifully illustrated
 by the evangelical prophet; “ He shall feed
 “ his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather
 “ the lambs with his arm, and carry them in
 “ his bosom, and shall gently lead those that
 “ are with young^m.”

His own dear flock the royal shepherd feeds,
 His chosen sheep to living waters leads,
 His precious lambs which in his bosom lay,
 To pastures green he safely doth convey,
 And gathers with his arm whene’er they stray;
 Gently he leads the ewes that are with young,
 Whose burden far exceeds the reach of tongue;
 Their mournful bleating moves the shepherd’s soul,
 Kindly he brings them to his royal fold.

Again, the apostle assures the Corinthians,
 that God should confirm them unto the
 end; “ that, says he, ye may be blameless in
 “ the

¹ John x. 27.

^m Isaiah xl. 11.

"the day of our Lord Jesus Christ; God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his son Jesus Christ our Lord".

Many other things might be said in favour of this point, but I hasten, lastly, to observe the immutability of God's covenant confirmed by his promise and oath; which are the two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, and which afford strong consolation to them who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them^a; and so may be confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in them, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. I shall now conclude with a brief improvement;

1. Let us enquire whether this good work is begun in us; let us reflect if we can, on the time when, place where, and the instrument the Lord was pleased to make use of in our first awakening; and if not, let us see whether the effects of grace do not discover themselves, such as an hatred of sin as sin, a love to holiness, hungriings and thirstings after Christ, and such desires as I have briefly taken notice of: if so, then we may safely conclude, that a good work is begun, that it is God's work^b

E and

^a 1 Cor. i. 8, 9.

^b Heb. vi. 17, 18.

and to him the glory is due; so that we may say with the Psalmist of old, "Not unto us
 " O Lord, not unto us, but unto thee be the
 " glory." 2. Let us enquire what progress we make in the divine life, what fruit do we bring forth to his glory, and if upon an impartial scrutiny we find barrenness of soul, let us speedily enquire into the cause thereof; it may be we are living in the omission of some known duty, if so, we need not wonder at our barrenness, for negligence and fruitfulness are strangers to each other; or it may be, we are living in some allowed sin, gratifying our sensual appetite; if so, it is no wonder we have leanness of soul; this will make us lean from day to day, should we dwell in the king's house; so likewise if any intellectual fordid lust be nourished in our hearts, such as pride, envy, covetousness, hatred, malice, &c. and if we expect to prosper in the divine life, we shall find ourselves wretchedly mistaken.

" Mortifying therefore your members which
 " are on the earth, crucify the flesh with the
 " affections and lusts thereof." But if any who fear the Lord, and obey the voice of his servant, are complaining of their barrenness, I would say unto such, ye shall bring forth your fruit in

its

its season. The soul, like the earth, hath its winter and summer seasons, and though the sap may subside in the root in the winter, yet it will rise in the spring. Thus it is with the soul, grace may subside, but it shall never be extinct; when Orion hath acted his part with his frozen girdle, then the Pleiades take their turn with their sweet influence. 3. Are there any here mourning under a sense of backsliding, and fear they have no part nor lot in this matter, over whom the enemy is rejoicing, saying, where is your perseverance now? Let such precious humble penitents know for their support, that persevering grace doth not always secure against falling, as appears from the falls of many eminent saints, but it is engaged to raise up when fallen, which they know by blessed experience; so that such mourners may say with the church of old, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall, I shall arise, when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me;" and may be confident of this very thing, "That he which hath begun a good work in them, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

F I N I S.